A

PROJECT

FOR THE

Advancement of RELIGION,

AND THE

Reformation of MANNERS.

Written in the Year 1709.

TO THE

Countess of *BERKELEY*.

MADAM,

MY Intention in prefixing your Ladyship's Name, is not after the common Form, to desire your Protection of the following Papers; which I take to be a very unreasonable Request; since by being inscribed to your Ladyship, although without your Knowledge, and from a concealed Hand, you cannot recommend them without some Suspicion of Partiality. My real Design is, I confess, the very same I have often detested in most Dedications; That of publishing your Praises to the World. Not upon the Subject of your noble Birth, for I know others as noble; or of the Greatness of your Fortune, for I know others far greater; or of that beautiful Race (the Images of their Parents) which calls you Mother: For even this may, perhaps, have been equalled in some other Age, or Country. Besides, none of these Advantages do derive any Accomplishments to the Owners; but serve, at best, only to adorn what they really possess. What I intend, is your Piety, Truth, good Sense, and good Nature, Affability and Charity; wherein I wish your Ladyship had many Equals, or any Superiors; and I wish I could say,

I knew them too; for then your Ladyship might have had a Chance to escape this Address. In the mean Time, I think it highly necessary for the Interest of Virtue and Religion, that the whole Kingdom should be informed in some Parts of your Character: For Instance: That the easiest and politest Conversation, joined with the truest Piety, may be observed in your Ladyship, in as great Perfection, as they were ever seen apart in any other Persons. That by your Prudence and Management under several Disadvantages, you have preserved the Lustre of that most noble Family, into which you are grafted, and which the unmeasurable Profusion of Ancestors, for many Generations, had too much eclipsed. Then, how happily you perform every Office of Life, to which Providence hath called you: In the Education of those two incomparable Daughters, whose Conduct is so universally admired; in every Duty of a prudent, complying, affectionate Wife; in that Care which descends to the meanest of your Domesticks; and lastly, in that endless Bounty to the Poor, and Discretion where to distribute it. I insist on my Opinion, that it is of Importance for the Publick to know this, and a great deal more of your Ladyship; yet whoever goes about to inform them, shall, instead of finding Credit, perhaps be censured for a Flatterer. To avoid so usual a Reproach, I declare this to be no Dedication; but meerly an Introduction to a Proposal for the Advancement of Religion and Morals; by tracing, however imperfectly, some few Lineaments in the Character of a Lady, who hath spent all her Life in the Practice and Promotion of both.

AMONG all the Schemes offered to the Publick in this projecting Age, I have observed, with some Displeasure, that there have never been any for the Improvement of Religion and Morals: Which, besides the Piety of the Design from the Consequences of such a Reformation in a future Life, would be the best natural Means for advancing the publick Felicity of the State, as well as the present Happiness of every Individual. For, as much as Faith and Morality are declined among us, I am altogether confident, they might, in a short Time, and with no very great Trouble, be raised to as high a Perfection, as Numbers are

capable of receiving. Indeed, the Method is so easy and obvious, and some present Opportunities so good; that, in order to have this Project reduced to Practice, there seems to want nothing more than to put those in mind, who by their Honour, Duty, and Interest are chiefly concerned.

BUT, because it is idle to propose Remedies before we are assured of the Disease, or to be in Fear, until we are convinced of the Danger; I shall first shew in general, that the Nation is extreamly corrupted in Religion and Morals; and then, I will offer a short Scheme for the Reformation of both.

AS to the first; I know it is reckoned but a Form of Speech, when Divines complain of the Wickedness of the Age: However, I believe, upon a fair Comparison with other Times and Countries, it would be found an undoubted Truth.

FOR first, to deliver nothing but plain Matter of Fact, without Exaggeration or Satyr: I suppose it will be granted, that hardly One in a Hundred among our People of Quality, or Gentry, appears to act by any Principle of Religion. That great Numbers of them do entirely discard it, and are ready to own their Disbelief of all Revelation in ordinary Discourse. Nor is the Case much better among the Vulgar, especially in great Towns; where the Prophaneness and Ignorance of Handicraftsmen, small Traders, Servants, and the like, are to a Degree very hard to be imagined greater. Then, it is observed abroad, that no Race of Mortals hath so little Sense of Religion as the *English* Soldiers: To confirm which, I have been often told by great Officers in the Army, that in the whole Compass of their Acquaintance, they could not recollect three of their Profession, who seemed to regard, or believe one Syllable of the Gospel: And the same, at least, may be affirmed of the Fleet. The Consequences of all which, upon the Actions of Men, are equally manifest. They never go about, as in former Times, to hide or palliate their Vices; but expose them freely to View, like any other common Occurrences of Life, without the least Reproach from the World, or themselves. For Instance, any Man will tell you, he intends to be drunk this Evening, or was so last Night, with as little Ceremony or Scruple, as he would tell you the Time of the Day. He will let you know he is going to a Wench, or

that he has got a Clap; with as much Indifferency as he would a Piece of publick News. He will swear, curse, or blaspheme, without the least Passion or Provocation. And, although all Regard for Reputation be not quite laid aside in the other Sex; it is, however, at so low an Ebb, that very few among them, seem to think Virtue and Conduct of any Necessity for preserving it. If this be not so; how comes it to pass, that Women of tainted Reputations find the same Countenance and Reception in all publick Places, with those of the nicest Virtue, who pay, and receive Visits from them, without any Manner of Scruple? Which Proceeding, as it is not very old among us, so I take it to be of most pernicious Consequence. It looks like a Sort of compounding between Virtue and Vice; as if a Woman were allowed to be vicious, provided she be not profligate: As if there were a certain Point where Gallantry ends, and Infamy begins; or that an Hundred criminal Amours were not as pardonable as Half a Score.

BESIDE those Corruptions already mentioned, it would be endless to ennumerate such as arise from the Excess of Play, or Gaming: The Cheats, the Quarrels, the Oaths and Blasphemies, among the Men: Among the Women, the Neglect of Household Affairs, the unlimited Freedoms, the undecent Passion; and lastly the known Inlet to all Lewdness, when after an ill Run, the *Person* must answer the Defects of the *Purse*: The Rule on such Occasions holding true in Play, as it doth in Law; *Quod non habet in Crumena, luat in Corpore.*

BUT all these are Trifles in Comparison, if we step into other Scenes, and consider the Fraud and Cozenage of trading Men and Shop-Keepers; that insatiable Gulph of Injustice and Oppression: The *Law*. The open Traffick of all Civil and Military Employments (I wish it rested there) without the least Regard to Merit or Qualifications: The corrupt Management of Men in Office: The many detestable Abuses in chusing those, who represent the People; with the Management of Interest and Factions among the Representatives: To which I must be bold to add the Ignorance among some of the lower Clergy; the mean servile Temper of others; the pert pragmatical Demeanour of several young Stagers in Divinity, upon their first producing

themselves into the World. With many other Circumstances needless, or rather invidious to mention; which falling in with the Corruptions already related, have, however unjustly, almost rendered the whole Order contemptible.

THIS is a short View of the general Depravities among us, without entering into Particulars, which would be an endless Labour. Now, as universal and deep-rooted as these Corruptions appear to be, I am utterly deceived, if an effectual Remedy might not be applied to most of them; neither am I at present upon a wild speculative Project, but such a one, as may be easily put in Execution.

FOR, while the Prerogative of giving all Employments continues in the Crown, either immediately or by Subordination; it is in the Power of the *Prince* to make Piety and Virtue become the Fashion of the Age; if at the same Time he would make them necessary Qualifications for Favour and Preferment.

IT is clear from present Experience, that the bare Example of the best Prince, will not have any mighty Influence where the Age is very corrupt. For, when was there ever a better Prince on the Throne than the present Queen? I do not talk of her Talent for Government, her Love of the People, or any other Qualities that are purely regal; but her Piety, Charity, Temperance, conjugal Love, and whatever other Virtues do best adorn a private Life; wherein without Question or Flattery, she hath no Superior: Yet neither will it be Satyr or peevish Invective to affirm, that Infidelity and Vice are not much diminished since her coming to the Crown; nor will, in Probability, till more effectual Remedies be provided.

THUS human Nature seems to lie under this Disadvantage, that the Example alone of a vicious Prince, will in Time corrupt an Age; but the Example of a good one will not be sufficient to reform it without further Endeavours. Princes must therefore supply this Defect by a vigorous Exercise of that Authority, which the Law hath left them, by making it every Man's Interest and Honour to cultivate Religion and Virtue; by rendering Vice a Disgrace, and the certain Ruin to Preferment or Pretensions: All which they should first attempt in their own Courts and Families. For Instance, might not the Queen's Domesticks of

the middle and lower Sort, be obliged upon Penalty of Suspension, or Loss of their Employments, to a constant weekly Attendance on the Service of the Church; to a decent Behaviour in it; to receive the Sacrament four times a Year; to avoid Swearing and irreligious profane Discourses; and to the Appearance at least, of Temperance and Chastity? Might not the Care of all this be committed to the strict Inspection of proper Officers? Might not those of higher Rank, and nearer Access to Her Majesty, receive her own Commands to the same Purpose, and be countenanced or disfavoured according as they obey? Might not the Queen lay her Injunctions on the Bishops and other great Men of undoubted Piety, to make diligent Enquiry, and give Her Notice, whether any Person about Her should happen to be of Libertine Principles or Morals? Might not all those who enter upon any Office in Her Majesty's Family, be obliged to take an Oath parallel with that against *Symony*, which is administred to the Clergy? It is not to be doubted, but that if these or the like Proceedings were duly observed, Morality and Religion would soon become fashionable Court-Virtues; and be taken up as the only Methods to get or keep Employments there; which alone would have a mighty Influence upon many of the Nobility, and principal Gentry.

BUT, if the like Methods were pursued as far as possible, with Regard to those who are in the great Employments of the State; it is hard to conceive how general a Reformation they might in Time produce among us. For if Piety and Virtue were once reckoned Qualifications necessary to Preferment; every Man thus endowed, when put into great Stations, would readily imitate the Queen's Example in the Distribution of all Offices in his Disposal; especially, if any apparent Transgression through Favour or Partiality, would be imputed to him for a Misdemeanour, by which he must certainly forfeit his Favour and Station: And there being such great Numbers in Employment, scattered through every Town and County in this Kingdom; if all these were exemplary in the Conduct of their Lives, Things would soon take a new Face, and Religion receive a mighty Encouragement: Nor would the publick Weal be less advanced; since of nine Offices in ten that are ill executed, the Defect is not

in Capacity or Understanding, but in common Honesty. I know no Employment, for which Piety disqualifies any Man; and if it did, I doubt, the Objection would not be very seasonably offered at present: Because, it is perhaps too just a Reflection, that in the Disposal of Places, the Question whether a Person be *fit* for what he is recommended to, is generally the last that is thought on, or regarded.

I HAVE often imagined, that something parallel to the Office of Censors antiently in *Rome*, would be of mighty Use among us; and could be easily limited from running into any Exorbitances. The *Romans* understood Liberty at least as well as we; were as jealous of it, and upon every Occasion as bold Assertors: Yet I do not remember to have read any great Complaints of the Abuses in that Office among them; but many admirable Effects of it are left upon Record. There are several pernicious Vices frequent and notorious among us, that escape or elude the Punishment of any Law we have yet invented, or have had no Law at all against them; such as Atheism, Drunkenness, Fraud, Avarice, and several others; which by this Institution wisely regulated, might be much reformed. Suppose for Instance, that itinerary Commissioners were appointed to inspect every where throughout the Kingdom, into the Conduct (at least) of Men in Office, with respect to their Morals and Religion, as well as their Abilities; to receive the Complaints and Informations that should be offered against them; and make their Report here upon Oath, to the Court or the Ministry; who should reward or punish accordingly. I avoid entering into the Particulars of this or any other Scheme, which coming from a private Hand, might be liable to many Defects, but would soon be digested by the Wisdom of the Nation: And surely, six thousand Pounds a Year would not be ill laid out among as many Commissioners duly qualified; who in three Divisions should be personally obliged to take their yearly Circuits for that Purpose.

BUT this is beside my present Design, which was only to shew what Degree of Reformation is in the Power of the Queen, without Interposition of the Legislature; and which Her Majesty is without Question obliged in Conscience to endeavour

by Her Authority, as much as She doth by her Practice.

It will be easily granted, that the Example of this great Town hath a mighty Influence over the whole Kingdom; and it is as manifest, that the Town is equally influenced by the Court and the Ministry, and those, who by their Employments or their Hopes, depend upon them. Now, if under so excellent a Princess, as the present Queen, we would suppose a Family strictly regulated as I have above proposed; a Ministry, where every single Person was of distinguished Piety; if we should suppose all great Offices of State and Law filled after the same Manner, and with such as were equally diligent in chusing Persons, who in their several Subordinations would be obliged to follow the Examples of their Superiors, under the Penalty of Loss of Favour and Place; will not every Body grant, that the Empire of Vice and Irreligion would be soon destroyed in this great Metropolis, and receive a terrible Blow through the whole Island, which hath so great an Intercourse with it, and so much affects to follow its Fashions?

For, if Religion were once understood to be the necessary Step to Favour and Preferment; can it be imagined, that any Man would openly offend against it, who had the least Regard for his Reputation or his Fortune? There is no Quality so contrary to any Nature, which Men cannot affect, and put on upon Occasion, in order to serve an Interest, or gratify a prevailing Passion: The proudest Man will personate Humility, the morosest learn to flatter, the laziest will be sedulous and active, where he is in pursuit of what he hath much at Heart: How ready therefore would most Men be to step into the Paths of Virtue and Piety, if they infallibly led to Favour and Fortune?

If Swearing and Prophaneness, scandalous and avowed Lewdness, excessive Gaming and Intemperance were a little discountenanced in the Army, I cannot readily see what ill Consequences could be apprehended: If Gentlemen of that Profession were at least obliged to some external Decorum in their Conduct; or even if a profligate Life and Character were not a Means of Advancement, and the Appearance of Piety a most infallible Hindrance; it is impossible the Corruptions there should be so universal and exorbitant. I have been assured by several great

Officers, that no Troops abroad are so ill disciplined as the *English*; which cannot well be otherwise, while the common Soldiers have perpetually before their Eyes the vicious Example of their Leaders: And it is hardly possible for those to commit any Crime, whereof these are not infinitely more guilty, and with less Temptation.

IT is commonly charged upon the Gentlemen of the Army, that the beastly Vice of Drinking to Excess, hath been lately from their Example restored among us; which for some Years before was almost dropt in *England*. But whoever the Introducers were, they have succeeded to a Miracle; many of the young Nobility and Gentry are already become great Proficients, and are under no manner of Concern to hide their Talent; but are got beyond all Sense of Shame, or Fear of Reproach.

THIS might soon be remedied, if the Queen would think fit to declare, that no young Person of Quality whatsoever, who was notoriously addicted to that or any other Vice should be capable of Her Favour, or even admitted into her Presence; with positive Command to Her Ministers and others in great Office, to treat them in the same Manner; after which, all Men, who had any Regard for their Reputation, or any Prospect of Preferment, would avoid their Commerce. This would quickly make that Vice so scandalous, that those, who could not subdue, would at least endeavour to disguise it.

BY the like Methods, a Stop might be put to that ruinous Practice of deep Gaming: And the Reason why it prevails so much, is because a Treatment *directly opposite* in every Point is made use of to promote it; by which Means the Laws enacted against this Abuse are wholly eluded.

IT cannot be denied, that the want of strict Discipline in the Universities, hath been of pernicious Consequence to the Youth of this Nation, who are there almost left entirely to their own Management; especially those among them of better Quality and Fortune; who, because they are not under a Necessity of making Learning their Maintenance, are easily allowed to pass their Time, and take their Degrees with little or no Improvement: Than which there cannot well be a greater Absurdity. For if no Advancement of Knowledge can be had from those

Places, the Time there spent is at best utterly lost, because every ornamental Part of Education is better taught elsewhere: And as for keeping Youths out of Harm's Way, I doubt, where so many of them are got together, at full Liberty of doing what they please, it will not answer the End. But, whatever Abuses, Corruptions, or Deviations from Statutes have crept into the Universities, through Neglect, or Length of Time; they might in a great Degree be reformed by strict Injunctions from Court, (upon each Particular, to the Visitors and Heads of Houses;) besides the peculiar Authority the Queen may have in several Colleges, whereof her Predecessors were the Founders. And among other Regulations, it would be very convenient to prevent the Excess of Drinking, with that scurvy Custom among the Lads, and Parent of the former Vice, the taking of Tobacco, where it is not absolutely necessary in point of Health.

FROM the Universities, the young Nobility, and others of great Fortunes are sent for early up to Town, for fear of contracting any Airs of Pedantry by a College-Education. Many of the younger Gentry retire to the Inns of Court, where they are wholly left to their own Discretion. And the Consequence of this Remisness in Education appears by observing that nine in ten of those, who rise in the Church or the Court, the Law or the Army, are younger Brothers, or new Men, whose narrow Fortunes have forced them upon Industry and Application.

As for the Inns of Court; unless we suppose them to be much degenerated, they must needs be the worst instituted Seminaries in any Christian Country; but whether they may be corrected without Interposition of the Legislature, I have not Skill enough to determine. However it is certain, that all wise Nations have agreed in the Necessity of a strict Education; which consisted among other Things, in the Observance of moral Duties, especially Justice, Temperance, and Chastity, as well as the Knowledge of Arts, and bodily Exercises: But all these, among us, are laughed out of Doors.

WITHOUT the least Intention to offend the Clergy; I cannot but think, that through a mistaken Notion and Practice, they prevent themselves from doing much Service, which otherwise might lie in their Power, to Religion and Virtue: I mean, by

affecting so much to converse with each other, and caring so little to mingle with the Laity. They have their particular Clubs, and particular Coffee-Houses, where they generally appear in Clusters: A single Divine dares hardly shew his Person among Numbers of fine Gentlemen; or if he happen to fall into such Company, he is silent and suspicious; in continual Apprehension, that some pert Man of Pleasure should break an unmannerly Jest, and render him ridiculous. Now, I take this Behaviour of the Clergy, to be just as reasonable, as if the Physicians should agree to spend their Time in visiting one another, or their several Apothecaries, and leave their Patients to shift for themselves. In my humble Opinion, the Clergy's Business lies entirely among the Laity; neither is there, perhaps, a more effectual Way to forward the Salvation of Mens Souls, than for spiritual Persons to make themselves as agreeable as they can, in the Conversations of the World; for which a learned Education gives them great Advantage, if they would please to improve and apply it. It so happens, that the *Men of Pleasure*, who never go to Church, nor amuse themselves to read Books of Devotion, form their Ideas of the Clergy, from a few poor Strolers they often observe in the Streets, or sneaking out of some Person of Quality's House, where they are hired by the Lady at Ten Shillings a Month; while those of better Figure and Parts do seldom appear to correct these Notions. And let some Reasoners think what they please; it is certain, that Men must be brought to esteem and love the Clergy, before they can be persuaded to be in love with Religion. No Man values the best Medicine, if administered by a Physician, whose Person he hates or despises. If the Clergy were as forward to appear in all Companies, as other Gentlemen, and would a little study the Arts of Conversation, to make themselves agreeable, they might be welcome at every Party, where there was the least Regard for Politeness, or good Sense; and consequently prevent a Thousand vicious or prophane Discourses, as well as Actions: Neither would Men of Understanding complain, that a Clergyman was a Constraint upon the Company; because they could not speak Blasphemy, or obscene Jests before him. While the People are so jealous of the Clergy's Ambition, as to abhor all Thoughts of the Return

of Ecclesiastick Discipline among them; I do not see any other Method left for Men of that Function to take, in order to reform the World, than by using all honest Arts to make themselves acceptable to the Laity. This, no doubt, is Part of that Wisdom of the Serpent, which the Author of Christianity directs; and is the very Method used by St. *Paul*, who *became all Things to all Men, to the* Jews *a* Jew, *and a* Greek *to the* Greeks.

How to remedy these Inconveniences, may be a Matter of some Difficulty; since the Clergy seem to be of an Opinion, that this Humour of sequestring themselves is a Part of their Duty; nay, as I remember, they have been told so by some of their Bishops in their Pastoral Letters, particularly by * *one* among them; who yet, in his own Practice, hath all his Life-time taken a Course directly contrary. But I am deceived, if an awkard Shame, and fear of ill Usage from the Laity, have not a greater Share in this mistaken Conduct, than their own Inclinations: However, if the outward Profession of Religion and Virtue, were once in Practice and Countenance at Court, as well as among all Men in Office, or who have any Hopes or Dependance for Preferment; a good Treatment of the Clergy would be the necessary Consequence of such a Reformation; and they would soon be wise enough to see their own Duty and Interest, in qualifying themselves for Lay-Conversation, when once they were out of Fear of being choqued by Ribaldry, or Prophaneness.

There is one further Circumstance upon this Occasion, which I know not whether it will be very orthodox to mention: The Clergy are the only Set of Men among us, who constantly wear a distinct Habit from others: The Consequence of which (not in Reason, but in Fact) is this, that as long as any scandalous Persons appear in that Dress, it will continue, in some Degree, a general Mark of Contempt. Whoever happens to see a *Scoundrel in a Gown*, reeling home at Midnight, (a Sight neither *frequent* nor *miraculous*) is apt to entertain an ill Idea of the whole Order; and, at the same Time, to be extreamly comforted in his own Vices. Some Remedy might be put to this, if those straggling Gentlemen, who come up to Town to *seek their Fortunes*,

* *Supposed to be Dr.* Burnet, *Bishop of* Salisbury.

were fairly dismissed to the *West Indies*; where there is Work enough, and where some better Provision should be made for them, than I doubt there is at present. Or, what if no Person were allowed to wear the Habit, who had not some Preferment in the Church; or, at least, some temporal Fortune sufficient to keep him out of Contempt?

THERE is one Abuse in this Town, which wonderfully contributes to the Promotion of Vice; when such Men are often put into the Commission of the Peace, whose Interest it is, that Virtue should be utterly banished from among us; who maintain, or at least enrich themselves by encouraging the grossest Immoralities; to whom all the *Bawds* of the *Ward* pay Contribution for Shelter and Protection from the Laws. Thus these worthy Magistrates, instead of lessening Enormities, are the Occasion of just twice as much Debauchery as there would be without them. For those infamous Women are forced upon doubling their Work and Industry, to answer double Charges, of paying the Justice, and supporting themselves: Like Thieves who escape the Gallows, and are let out to steal, in order to discharge the Goaler's Fees.

IT is not to be questioned, but the Queen and Ministry might easily redress this abominable Grievance; by enlarging the Number of Justices of the Peace; by endeavouring to chuse Men of virtuous Principles; by admitting none, who have not considerable Fortunes; perhaps by receiving into the Number some of the most eminent Clergy: Then, by forcing all of them, upon severe Penalties, to act when there is Occasion; and not permitting any, who are offered, to refuse the Commission. But in these two last Cases, which are very material, I doubt there would be need of the Legislature.

THE Reformation of the Stage is entirely in the Power of the Queen; and in the Consequences it hath upon the Minds of younger People, doth very well deserve the strictest Care. Beside the undecent and prophane Passages; beside the perpetual turning into Ridicule the very Function of the Priesthood; with other Irregularities in most modern Comedies, which have been often objected to them; it is worth observing the distributive Justice of the Authors, which is constantly applied to

the Punishment of Virtue, and the Reward of Vice; directly opposite to the Rules of their best Criticks, as well as to the Practice of Dramatick Poets in all other Ages and Countries. For Example; a Country 'Squire, who is represented with no other Vice but that of being a Clown, and having the provincial Accent upon his Tongue, which is neither a Fault, nor in his Power to remedy, must be condemned to marry a cast Wench, or a cracked Chamber Maid. On the other Side, a Rakehell of the Town, whose Character is set off with no other Accomplishments but excessive Prodigality, Prophaneness, Intemperance, and Lust; is rewarded with the Lady of great Fortune, to repair his own, which his Vices had almost ruined. And as in a Tragedy, the Hero is represented to have obtained many Victories, in order to raise his Character in the Minds of the Spectators; so the Hero of a Comedy is represented to have been victorious in all his Intrigues for the same Reason. I do not remember that our *English* Poets ever suffered a criminal Amour to succeed upon the Stage, until the Reign of King *Charles* the Second. Ever since that Time, the Alderman is made a Cuckold, the deluded Virgin is debauched; and Adultery and Fornication are supposed to be committed behind the Scenes, as Part of the Action. These and many more Corruptions of the Theatre, peculiar to our Age and Nation, need continue no longer than while the Court is content to connive at, or neglect them. Surely a Pension would not be ill employed on some Man of Wit, Learning, and Virtue, who might have Power to strike out every offensive, or unbecoming Passage from Plays already written, as well as those that may be offered to the Stage for the future. By which, and other wise Regulations, the Theatre might become a very innocent and useful Diversion, instead of being a Scandal and Reproach of our Religion and Country.

THE Proposals I have hitherto made, for the Advancement of Religion and Morality, are such, as come within the Reach of the Administration; such as a pious active Prince, with a steddy Resolution, might soon bring to Effect. Neither am I aware of any Objections to be raised against what I have advanced; unless it should be thought, that the making Religion a necessary Step to Interest and Favour, might encrease Hypocrisy among us:

And I readily believe it would. But if One in Twenty should be brought over to true Piety by this, or the like Methods, and the other Nineteen be only Hypocrites, the Advantage would still be great. Besides, Hypocrisy is much more eligible than open Infidelity and Vice: It wears the Livery of Religion, it acknowledgeth her Authority, and is cautious of giving Scandal. Nay, a long continued Disguise is too great a Constraint upon human Nature, especially an *English* Disposition. Men would leave off their Vices out of meer Weariness, rather than undergo the Toil and Hazard, and perhaps Expence of practising them perpetually in private. And, I believe, it is often with Religion as it is with Love; which, by much Dissembling, at last grows real.

ALL other Projects to this great End, have proved hitherto ineffectual. Laws against Immorality have not been executed; and Proclamations occasionally issued out to enforce them, are wholly unregarded as Things of Form. Religious Societies, although begun with excellent Intention, and by Persons of true Piety, are said, I know not whether truly or no, to have dwindled into factious Clubs, and grown a Trade to enrich little knavish Informers of the meanest Rank, such as common Constables, and broken Shop-keepers.

AND that some effectual Attempt should be made towards such a Reformation, is perhaps more necessary, than People commonly apprehend; because the Ruin of a State is generally preceded by an universal Degeneracy of Manners, and Contempt of Religion; which is entirely our Case at present.

Diis te minorem, quod geris, imperas.

NEITHER is this a Matter to be deferred till a more convenient Time of Peace and Leisure: A Reformation in Mens Faith and Morals, is the best natural, as well as religious Means to bring the War to a good Conclusion. Because, if Men in Trust performed their Duty for Conscience Sake, Affairs would not suffer through Fraud, Falshood, and Neglect, as they now perpetually do: And if they believed a God and his Providence, and acted accordingly, they might reasonably hope for his Divine Assistance in so just a Cause as ours.

NOR could the Majesty of the *English* Crown appear, upon

any Occasion, in a greater Lustre, either to Foreigners, or Subjects, than by an Administration, which producing such good Effects, would discover so much Power. And Power being the natural Appetite of Princes; a limited Monarch cannot so well gratify it in any Point, as a strict Execution of the Laws.

BESIDES; all Parties would be obliged to close with so good a Work as this, for their own Reputation: Neither is any Expedient more likely to unite them. For, the most violent Partymen I have ever observed, are such as in the Conduct of their Lives have discovered least Sense of Religion, or Morality; and when all such are laid aside, at least those among them who shall be found incorrigible, it will be a Matter, perhaps, of no great Difficulty to reconcile the rest.

THE many Corruptions, at present, in every Branch of Business, are almost inconceivable. I have heard it computed by skilful Persons, that of Six Millions, raised every Year for the Service of the Publick, one Third, at least, is sunk and intercepted through the several Classes and Subordinations of artful Men in Office, before the Remainder is applied to the proper Use. This is an accidental ill Effect of our Freedom: And while such Men are in Trust, who have no Check from within, nor any Views but towards their Interest; there is no other Fence against them, but the Certainty of being hanged upon the first Discovery, by the arbitrary Will of an unlimited Monarch, or his *Vizier*. Among Us, the only Danger to be apprehended, is the Loss of an Employment; and that Danger is to be eluded a Thousand Ways. Besides, when Fraud is great, it furnisheth Weapons to defend it self: And, at worst, if the Crimes be so flagrant, that a Man is laid aside out of perfect Shame, (which rarely happens) he retires loaded with the Spoils of the Nation; *Et fruitur Diis iratis*. I could name a Commission, where several Persons out of a Sallary of Five Hundred Pounds, without other visible Revenues, have always lived at the Rate of Two Thousand, and laid out Forty or Fifty Thousand upon Purchases of Land, or Annuities. An Hundred other Instances of the same Kind might easily be produced. What Remedy, therefore, can be found against such Grievances in a Constitution like ours, but to bring Religion into Countenance, and encourage

those who, from the Hope of future Reward, and Dread of future Punishment, will be moved to act with Justice and Integrity?

THIS is not to be accomplished any other Way, than by introducing Religion, as much as possible, to be the Turn and Fashion of the Age; which only lies in the Power of the Administration; the Prince with utmost Strictness regulating the Court, the Ministry, and other Persons in great Employment; and these, by their Example and Authority, reforming all who have Dependance on them.

IT is certain, that a Reformation, successfully carried on in this great Town, would, in Time, spread it self over the whole Kingdom; since most of the considerable Youth pass here that Season of their Lives, wherein the strongest Impressions are made, in order to improve their Education, or advance their Fortune: And those among them who return into their several Countries, are sure to be followed and imitated, as the greatest Patterns of Wit and good Breeding.

AND if Things were once in this Train; that is, if Virtue and Religion were established as the necessary Titles to Reputation and Preferment; and if Vice and Infidelity were not only loaden with Infamy, but made the infallible Ruin of all Mens Pretensions; our Duty, by becoming our Interest, would take Root in our Natures, and mix with the very Genius of our People; so that it would not be easy for the Example of one wicked Prince, to bring us back to our former Corruptions.

I HAVE confined my self (as it is before observed) to those Methods for the Advancement of Piety, which are in the Power of a Prince limited like ours, by a strict Execution of the Laws already in Force. And this is enough for a Project that comes without any Name, or Recommendation: I doubt, a great deal more than will suddenly be reduced into Practice. Although, if any Disposition should appear towards so good a Work, it is certain, that the Assistance of the legislative Power would be necessary to make it more compleat. I will instance only in a few Particulars.

IN order to reform the Vices of this Town, which, as we have said, hath so mighty an Influence on the whole Kingdom; it

would be very instrumental, to have a Law made, that all Taverns, or Ale-houses should be obliged to dismiss their Company by Twelve at Night, and shut up their Doors; and that no Woman should be suffered to enter any Tavern, or Ale-house upon any Pretence whatsoever. It is easy to conceive, what a Number of ill Consequences such a Law would prevent; the Mischiefs of Quarrels and Lewdness, and Thefts, and Midnight Brawls, the Diseases of Intemperance and Venery; and a Thousand other Evils needless to mention. Nor would it be amiss, if the Masters of those publick Houses were obliged, upon the severest Penalties, to give only a proportioned Quantity of Drink to every Company; and when he found his Guests disordered with Excess, to refuse them any more.

I BELIEVE there is hardly a Nation in *Christendom*, where all Kind of Fraud is practised in so unmeasurable a Degree as with us. The Lawyer, the Tradesman, the Mechanick, have found so many Arts to deceive in their several Callings, that they far outgrow the common Prudence of Mankind, which is in no Sort able to fence against them. Neither could the Legislature, in any Thing, more consult the publick Good, than by providing some effectual Remedy against this Evil; which, in several Cases, deserves greater Punishment than many Crimes that are capital among us. The Vintner, who, by mixing Poison with his Wines, destroys more Lives than any malignant Disease: The Lawyer, who persuades you to a Purchase, which he knows is mortgaged for more than the Worth, to the Ruin of you and your Family: The Banquier or Scrivener, who takes all your Fortune to dispose of, when he hath beforehand resolved to break the following Day; do surely deserve the Gallows much better than the Wretch, who is carried thither for stealing a Horse.

IT cannot easily be answered to God or Man, why a Law is not made for limiting the Press; at least so far as to prevent the publishing of such pernicious Books, as under Pretence of *Free-Thinking*, endeavour to overthrow those Tenets in Religion, which have been held inviolable almost in all Ages by every Sect that pretends to be Christian; and cannot therefore with any Colour of Reason be called *Points in Controversy*, or *Matters of Speculation*, as some would pretend. The Doctrine of the *Trinity*,

the *Divinity of Christ*, the *Immortality of the Soul*, and even the Truth of all Revelation are daily exploded, and denied in Books openly printed; although it is to be supposed, that neither Party avow such Principles, or own the supporting of them to be any way necessary to their Service.

IT would be endless to set down every Corruption or Defect, which requires a Remedy from the legislative Power. Senates are like to have little Regard for any Proposals that come from *without Doors*: Although under a due Sense of my own Inabilities, I am fully convinced that the unbiassed Thoughts of an honest and wise Man, employed on the Good of his Country, may be better digested, than the Results of a Multitude, where Faction and Interest too often prevail: As a single Guide may direct the Way, better than five Hundred who *have contrary Views*, or *look asquint*, or *shut their Eyes*.

I SHALL mention but one more Particular, which I think a Parliament ought to take under Consideration: Whether it be not a Shame to our Country, and a Scandal to Christianity, that in many Towns, where there is a prodigious Increase in the Number of Houses and Inhabitants, so little Care should be taken for the Building of Churches, that five Parts in six of the People are absolutely hindered from hearing Divine Service? Particularly here in * *London*, where a single Minister with one or two sorry Curates, hath the Care sometimes of above twenty thousand Souls incumbent on him. A Neglect of Religion so ignominious in my Opinion, that it can hardly be equalled in any civilized Age or Country.

BUT, to leave these airy Imaginations of introducing new Laws for the Amendment of Mankind: What I principally insist on is the due Execution of the old, which lies wholly in the Crown, and in the Authority derived from thence: I return therefore to my former Assertion; that,(if Stations of Power, Trust, Profit, and Honour were constantly made the Rewards of Virtue and Piety; such an Administration must needs have a

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* *This Paragraph is known to have given the first Hint to certain Bishops, particularly to that most excellent Prelate Bishop* Atterbury, *in the Earl of* Oxford's *Ministry, to procure a Fund for building fifty new Churches in* London.

mighty Influence on the Faith and Morals of the whole Kingdom: And Men of great Abilities would *then* endeavour to excel in the Duties of a religious Life, in order to qualify themselves for publick Service) I may possibly be wrong in some of the Means I prescribe towards this End; but that is no material Objection against the Design it self. Let those, who are at the Helm contrive it better, which perhaps they may easily do. Every Body will agree, that the Disease is manifest, as well as dangerous; that some Remedy is necessary, and that none yet applied hath been effectual; which is a sufficient Excuse for any Man who wishes well to his Country, to offer his Thoughts, when he can have no other End in View but the publick Good. The present Queen is a Prince of as many and great Virtues as ever filled a Throne: How would it brighten Her Character to the present and after Ages, if she would exert Her utmost Authority to instil some Share of those Virtues into Her People, which they are too degenerate to learn only from Her Example. And, be it spoke with all the Veneration possible for so excellent a Sovereign; Her best Endeavours in this weighty Affair, are a most important Part of Her Duty, as well as of Her Interest, and Her Honour.

BUT, it must be confessed, That as Things are now, every Man thinks he hath laid in a sufficient Stock of Merit, and may pretend to any Employment, provided he hath been loud and frequent in declaring himself hearty for the Government. It is true he is a *Man of Pleasure*, and a *Free-Thinker*; that is, in other Words, he is profligate in his Morals, and a despiser of Religion; but in Point of Party, he is one to be *confided* in; he is an Asserter of Liberty and Property; he rattles it out against *Popery*, and *Arbitrary Power*, and *Priest Craft*, and *High-Church*. It is enough: He is a Person fully qualified for any Employment in the Court, or the Navy, the Law, or the Revenue; where he will be sure to leave no Arts untried of Bribery, Fraud, Injustice, Oppression, that he can practice with any Hope of Impunity. No Wonder such Men are true to a Government, where Liberty runs high, where Property, *however attained*, is so well secured, and where the Administration is at least so gentle: It is impossible they could chuse any other Constitution, without changing to their Loss.

FIDELITY, to a present Establishment, is indeed one principal Means to defend it from a foreign Enemy; but without other Qualifications will not prevent Corruptions from within: And States are more often ruined by these than the other.

To conclude: Whether the Proposals I have offered towards a Reformation, be such as are most prudent and convenient, may probably be a Question; but it is none at all, whether *some* Reformation be absolutely necessary; (because the Nature of Things is such, that if Abuses be not remedied, they will certainly encrease, nor ever stop till they end in the Subversion of a Common-Wealth.) As there must always of Necessity be some Corruptions; so in a well-instituted State, the executive Power will be always contending against them, by *reducing Things* (as *Machiavel* speaks) *to their first Principles*; never letting Abuses grow inveterate, or multiply so far that it will be hard to find Remedies, and perhaps impossible to apply them. As he that would keep his House in Repair, must attend every little Breach or Flaw, and supply it immediately, else Time alone will bring all to Ruin; how much more the common Accidents of Storms and Rain? He must live in perpetual Danger of his House falling about his Ears; and will find it cheaper to throw it quite down, and build it again from the Ground, perhaps upon a new Foundation, or at least in a new Form, which may neither be so safe nor so convenient as the old.